

What is the Bible? ¹

by Daryl Wingerd

The Bible is God’s Special Revelation

Mankind is dependent upon God for all things, even for the knowledge that God exists. Though God is under no obligation to reveal Himself, He chose to reveal Himself to mankind through creation. God reveals Himself as eternal, powerful, glorious, creative, orderly, loving, all-knowing, sovereign, and worthy of worship. By creating man in His own image, by giving him a soul, self-consciousness, the ability to reason, and a general knowledge of right and wrong, God reveals Himself as personal, holy, wise, righteous, and just. This is known as **general** revelation.

General revelation leaves every human being without excuse, since all are given enough knowledge to know that God exists and that He is to be loved and worshiped. In Romans 1:18-23, however, we are told that every person who has ever lived, despite their knowledge of God, has rejected Him. They refuse to acknowledge and worship Him. Instead their minds become darkened with sin and ignorance; they come up with their own ideas, turning to the foolishness of human wisdom and to idols made in the image of earthly creatures. Having rejected the knowledge of God, every person is justly condemned. To put it in simple terms, general revelation provides enough knowledge of God to get rebellious people like you and me *into* trouble, but not enough to get us *out of* it. We need something more.

This is where **special** revelation becomes important. Special revelation is what we have in the Bible. God was not obligated to save any of our rebellious race. He would have been perfectly just if He had decided to destroy all of us. But He did determine to save people, and the Bible tells us about His plan of salvation. From beginning to end—from Genesis through Revelation—the Bible reveals God’s redemptive plan for His people.

The Bible is Perfect

Although we often see error resulting from the misuse of Scripture, we must never assign the blame to the Bible itself. To do this would be to blame God—to accuse Him of giving us a less-than-perfect source of truth (a clear contradiction in terms). When the study of Scripture results in wrong thinking, the source of the error is always human.

We do not possess the original writings of any biblical author. But modern translations of the Bible are taken from manuscripts that were carefully, meticulously copied from these flawless originals. When we find the near-perfect agreement between these thousands of preserved manuscripts, despite their being copied and re-copied over hundreds of years and in a variety of countries and languages, we can rest assured that what we have today is a faithful representation of the actual words of God.

¹ This material adapted from the commentary section of the catechism for Christ Fellowship of Kansas City entitled, *Questions and Answers for Learning and Living the Christian Faith*, Copyright © 2004, Christ Fellowship of Kansas City.

The Bible is Inspired

The Bible was written by ordinary men. They had their own thoughts, ideas, and opinions which they recorded in both the Old and New Testaments. God did not reach down and take hold of their pens, causing them to write things which they would have never thought to write. And except for the instances where His audible words were recorded, God did not dictate the words of Scripture. Rather, He worked in these men, through their unique personalities, experiences, emotions, and intellects, causing them to record His words.

The Bible is the Final Authority

The Bible claims for itself a singular and final **authority** concerning all matters it addresses. No other instructions, written or verbal, represent a higher or even equal authority. This authority was not granted to God at one of the historical councils of the church; God does not need men to agree with Him or determine the extent of His authority. The Scriptures carry ultimate authority for one reason: They are the words of the sovereign Ruler of the universe.

The Bible is All We Need

The Bible is a **sufficient** source of truth and direction for salvation and for all significant aspects of life. A person should not search the Scriptures in hopes of learning the best way to poach an egg or repair an automobile. But when it comes to issues of sin, salvation, the church, the worship of God, evangelism, marriage, the education and discipline of children, relating to an immoral society, or any other aspect of Christian living, the Bible stands alone as sufficient. God’s Word does not need to be supplemented by human wisdom, ingenuity, philosophy, or psychology

To Summarize: The Holy Scripture

God has revealed all that is necessary for life and salvation in the sixty-six books of the Bible, which is the Word of God. All Scripture is inerrant and infallible, transmitted through human authors by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Scripture *alone* is the final authority in all matters of doctrine and practice. The authority of Scripture is derived from its Author and not from the opinions of men.²

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